

FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

15-61

Orleans

B

EAS.29,
1325

NRDIS 1999

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Eastham Center

Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2025

Address: 2500 State Highway

Historic Name: Eastham Town Hall

Uses: Present: Town Hall

Original: Town Hall

Date of Construction: 1913

Source: Town records

Style/Form: Colonial Revival

Architect/Builder: George C. Wales/ Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete

Wall/Trim: Brick

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Society of Colonial Wars First Encounter Beach Memorial
(1920, granite and bronze, EAS.900)

Former fire station (1951, Photo 4, EAS.1325)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Large addition (1951), major rehabilitation (1995)

Condition: Good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 2.32 acres

Setting: This large parcel is located across from the intersection with Samoset Road. The parcel contains both the Town Hall and Fire Department buildings. A large parking area is located south of the Town Hall and there are community playing fields east of the building. The property around Town Hall is landscaped with lawn and mature trees.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

(from Eastham Center National Register Nomination, with edits)

The Eastham Town Hall is a handsome Colonial Revival style building, the earliest brick building in Eastham. The Colonial Revival style began in the late-19th century with a new interest in the country's own architecture of the Colonial-era and early Republic, and was a style that remained popular well into the 20th century. The red brick, English bond exterior and formal detail stand in contrast to the simple wood-frame architecture that prevails in the community. The Town Hall was funded by philanthropic native son, Timothy Smith, and designed by architect George C. Wales.

Built on a seven by two bay rectangular plan, it rises one story from a high basement to a hip roof with boxed cornice. The basement story is set off by a row of vertical header bricks. A slightly over-scaled, open cupola, consisting of eight columns supporting a semi-circular dome, is centered on the roof. The building's symmetrical seven bay front elevation is centered on a projecting pavilion with four Tuscan columns rising to a full entablature and closed pediment. This bold element announces the location of the original main entrance which is approached by a broad flight of seven stairs framed by brick embrasures. The door is framed with a multi-pane transom, full-length sidelights, and wide pilasters that are aligned with the two inner columns. Long, narrow 6/6 lights above paneled aprons complete the portico treatment. The wooden double-leaf door is a replacement. Round-arched windows, set in recessed panels, contain 6/6 double-hung sash. A similarly detailed original wing is centered on the rear (east) elevation.

Town Hall was expanded with a large, compatible rear addition in 1951, which was the time of Eastham's Tercentenary. It originally housed an auditorium which was replaced by office space in a recent remodeling. Several meeting rooms of varying size were created in the basement at the same time. The original rear wing now acts as a bridge between the two primary wings. The addition was designed by Walter M. Gaffney in a simplified version of the original Colonial Revival style. Like the original building, the wing rises one story to a hip roof, has a red brick exterior, and marks its entrance with a projecting, pedimented portico. This now serves as the primary entrance to the building.

The parcel includes a small, one-story brick building with hip roof that served as a fire department building, but is now a recreation building (Photo 4).

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, Eastham was the agricultural center of the Outer Cape. Crops evolved over time; corn and dairy were surpassed in the early-20th century by asparagus and turnips - two crops well suited for the sandy soil. In 1900, 58% of Eastham's workers were employed as farmers, but by 1930 that number had dwindled to 21%. Summer resort development, including cottage colonies

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and subdivisions of former farmland that would transform Eastham, had begun in earnest in the 1920s as middle-class access to car ownership increased and Cape roads were improved.

(The following Narrative is from Eastham Center National Register Nomination, with edits)

The central role of Eastham Center in the life of the community was reinforced in 1913 when this new Town Hall was built, replacing the smaller wood-frame town hall that had been constructed in 1851 at the intersection of State Highway and Salt Pond Road (55 Salt Pond Road, EAS.112).

In 1911, the town voted to pay \$200 a year for eight years to any individual who was willing to build a suitable town hall. Instead, a single philanthropist, Timothy Smith (1835-1917), donated the present town hall in memory of his family. It was completed at a cost of \$15,000 and dedicated on May 22, 1913. The ceremony was a major public event that included music, speeches and refreshments along with a demonstration of the gas lighting system. Smith was born in Eastham on May 27, 1835 and learned the retail trade in nearby Harwich before moving to Boston in 1862. He and his cousin, James Knowles, established a large department store known as the Timothy Smith Company in Boston's Roxbury section. Smith and his wife, Ellen Brett, died without heirs and left their fortune to a variety of charitable organizations. In Eastham, they established a \$25,000 fund whose proceeds were to be used to support the needy, purchase books for the library, provide scholarships, and maintain the Town Hall. Bronze wall tablets were placed in the Town Hall in a ceremony on August 26, 1916, dedicated to the memory of Eastham's founders. Lt. Governor Calvin Coolidge represented the Commonwealth and unveiled the plaque honoring Governor Thomas Prentice. In 1920, the Society of Colonial Wars placed the First Encounter Memorial on the lawn of the Town Hall (EAS.900).

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www.ancestry.com - Vital records.

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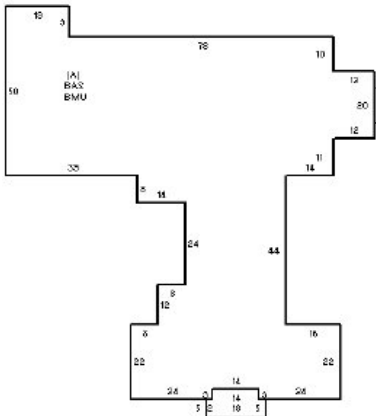


Figure 1. Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View looking southeast.



Photo 3. View looking north.



Photo 4. View of former fire station, looking east.